

“God is Dangerous”

Date: Dec. 6, 2015

Place: Lakewood UMC

Texts: Jeremiah 33:14-16; John 3:16-19

Occasion: Advent 2, Under Wraps, series Theme:

What *should* we do, when we see someone in need? Do we get involved, or keep on walking? Why do you think it was a struggle for these two women to simply walk away? An encounter with the living God is a dangerous thing – dangerous for those who oppose him, but also for those who love and follow him. God is dangerous.

But let’s back up just a minute. When was the last time you held a newborn baby in your arms? What words come to mind when you hold a newborn baby? *Precious. Tiny. Cute.* All perfect descriptions of a new baby. But how about *dangerous*?

Jesus would not have seemed dangerous to his mother and father, and the shepherds who came to see him – a tiny thing wrapped and swaddled and lying in a manger. But this baby was different. This baby was God-in-the-flesh: The King of kings, Lord of lords, Ruler of all, the Eternal Creator himself.

And Jesus was sent to walk the earth among human beings with a dangerous mission in mind. The Bible tells us that God is dangerous. God is dangerous because he’s a mighty God with powerful plans and expectations for his children.

I would suggest that God is dangerous for three reasons: **First**, God in Jesus is dangerous because he came to usher in a new era, when sin and death and Satan would be defeated.

Herod, the king at the time Jesus was born, was afraid of this newborn baby. Why? Because Jesus’ coming was a trumpet blast

from heaven that injustice and evil would not go unchallenged. Jesus was a threat not only to Herod, but all the unjust systems that existed. He challenged their reign of corruption with his perfect justice and divine grace. He still does today.

Jesus is dangerous all right. He is dangerous to the forces of darkness because he came to usher in a new era when sin would lose its grip on humanity, and death would not have the last word. Jesus was born into our world to bring light to the darkness.

On a cosmic level, Jesus came not only to thwart the spiritual battles that we fight daily, but also to turn the battle on its head. Jesus won the battle at Calvary, the decisive battle for all history. We live in the period between Christ's victory on the cross and the final consummation of all war.

So, the last gasp of evil has not been heard, but Christ continues to make advances for the kingdom, and to call us into battle with him. So dear friends, as we fight for the purposes of God, we need to remember that good is never a lost cause, since the battle has already been won for us on the cross. Amen?

Second, God in Jesus is dangerous because God wants more for us than we've considered. God has bigger, bolder dreams for us than we've ever dared to dream ourselves. An encounter with the living God is a dangerous thing. It was for Mary and Joseph. It was dangerous for the disciples, who dropped their nets to follow Jesus. And it's dangerous for you and me.

It's dangerous because Jesus expects us to become agents of his truth and love, and to bring light and life into the dark places of this world. An encounter with Jesus is always dangerous, because he

has big things in store for us, and it's probably going to be more than we ever dreamed or expected.

Ed Robb, who wrote the second chapter of our study book "*Under Wraps*," tells the story of buying a new television for his home. He wanted to buy one that fit into the cabinet he already had. But they don't make TV's that size any more.

So, his wife, who is pretty handy with tools, rebuilt the old cabinet; which led to redecorating the living room, which eventually led to the entire house being spruced up and redecorated.

The punch line to the story is this. There is nothing more dangerous than letting God start a project in you, because when you open the door of your heart to him, he will do something bigger than you ever anticipated.

Too often we invite Christ into our lives wanting just a little touch-up here and there, maybe a fresh coat of paint or some new drapes. But Christ isn't into remodeling; He is in the restoration business. He won't be satisfied until he shapes you into his image.

God in Christ is not willing to leave you in the marred and broken condition. He wants to totally recreate us and restore our lives that have been scarred by the fallen world.

God's work in our lives doesn't always feel comfortable. Sometimes it doesn't make sense. Sometimes it hurts. Why put us through these renovations? - Because God intends to come and reside there. That's what God is doing in our lives. The King wants to move in. And he's got some work to do.

God so loved the world.... He took on human flesh and came to live among us. Why? to save us from our sins; to redeem our lives; to

fully restore us. To worship Christ, the newborn King, is a dangerous thing, because it invites him into your heart, and you'll never be the same.

Third and finally, God in Jesus is dangerous because God wants us to have a dangerous faith, a faith that loves with abandon, a faith that pushes us out of our comfort zone. Christ is dangerous because he wants more for you than you've wanted for yourself.

Ed Robb writes, "God sometimes wants to do us a great favor by holding us upside down and shaking all the nonsense out. You see, God wants to change our lives more than we sometimes are willing to accept."

"And for that reason, God is dangerous. Jesus didn't come just to smooth out the wrinkles in your life, but to refashion you into His image. And that will make us dangerous too. Jesus wants us to become dangerous tools in his hands for the good of the world."

Do you have a dangerous faith, one that isn't afraid to follow the mission that is laid out before you, no matter what the cost, or where it may take you?

You see, I think what was going on with those two women who came across a homeless woman sitting on the ground on a cold winter's day (in our video): They were torn. I think they felt the call of God on their hearts, but they had not yet surrendered their fear.

Is God calling to you, to leave your comfort zone and invite a neighbor to church, or to a Bible study? Is God asking you to get out of your comfort zone and personally get involved with ministry to the homeless in Erie, maybe volunteering a couple of hours at the shelter?

Is God calling you to take a leap of faith and give sacrificially to your church in order to expand our outreach to the community? Is God calling you to take a stand against human trafficking, or racism, or an end to gun violence? It might make you unpopular. Could you trust God enough to do it anyway?

At Christmas time we gather around to gaze at peaceful scenes of Jesus as a baby, lying in a manger, surrounded by the familiar characters of the Christmas story. He is precious, tiny, divine. But we know the story doesn't end here, in the manger.

Jesus came to do a dangerous mission in the world – to destroy the power of death and sin, and restore us to a right relationship with God the Father. And He invites us to join Him in spreading God's light and truth into this fallen world.

Jesus fights for our hearts with his extraordinary love. His sacrifice leads our hearts to say, "Yes, Lord, we will follow." Amen?

Sermon borrows heavily from the book *Under Wraps: The Gift We Never Expected*. Ed Robb, pp. 31-42. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2014.